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Removing Stains from Textiles

An interview between Miss Ruth Van Deman and Miss Margaret Furry, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate stations, Tuesday, August 23, 1932.

MISS VAN DEMAN: How do you do, Everybody:

The other day our textile division gave me a surprising figure, at least not being a statistician I was surprised. The textile experts tell me that the mills of the United States turn out each year about 36 million square yards of cotton table damask alone. Then when you add to those 36 million square yards of new cotton damask all the fine imported linens and the tablecloths and napkins treasured for generations, you see that the women of America have quite a job on their hands to keep all these fabrics in good usable condition. Even with the best of care, the loss through poor laundering and stains and tears is tremendous. And table linen is just one of the many textiles used in the household.

So today Miss Margaret Furry is here to talk about one way of prolonging the life of fabrics. She's a textile chemist, and she's made a special study of taking stains out of fabrics. Hard to find a more practical application of chemistry in the home than that.

Now, Miss Furry, I know stain removal is quite a subject. I've seen the bulletin with an index of over one hundred different stains that we may get on our fabrics in the course of everyday use. So I'm going to ask you about only a few especially troublesome ones. First, what's the best way to get out fruit stains, made by berries or grapes?

MISS FURRY: If you don't mind, Miss Van Deman, I'll start the answer by asking another question. What kind of a fabric is the fruit stain on? Is it white or is it colored? And is it cotton, or linen, or silk, or wool, or rayon? If the fabric is cotton or linen, and if it's white, then you can bleach the stain out with little trouble. Let's assume that one of the tablecloths you just spoke of is badly stained with dark purple fruit juice.

First, I'd stretch that stained fabric over a bowl and I'd put the bowl on the floor. Then standing above it, I'd pour boiling water on the stain. I believe the purple will change to blue and gradually fade out, as the boiling water strikes the spot.

But if you've made the mistake of putting the stain into soap suds, then more than likely you'll have to use a chemical bleach. I always keep oxalic acid on hand. I buy the oxalic acid in white crystals and dissolve a little in water as needed. Apply some of the oxalic acid solution to the spot, let it stand a few minutes, and then try the boiling water again. Keep this up until all traces of the stain are gone. Then rinse in clear water and wash the whole cloth well in soap and water to remove the acid, or better still put a few drops of ammonia on the spot after rinsing. If the oxalic acid is left on, it will tender the fabric or even eat holes in it when pressed with a hot iron.

(over)

MISS VAN DEMAN: By the way, how do you spell the name of that acid? We aren't all chemists, you know.

MISS FURRY: Oh, you mean oxalic acid? That's spelled: O - x - a - l - i - c. Oxalic. And there are many other good bleaches such as Javelle water which you can buy or make at home. But oxalic acid is cheap and easy to get. But be sure you keep the poison mark on it, and use it only on white fabrics.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Is oxalic acid a good bleach for peach stains, also, Miss Furry?

MISS FURRY: I was rather hoping you wouldn't ask me about peach stains. They're such a problem because of the tannin in peaches. I find though that soaking a fabric stained with peaches in warm glycerine loosens the tannin. Then I apply oxalic acid solution, as I just described, and rinse, and neutralize with ammonia. I'm still talking about white cotton and linen, of course. The warm glycerine works equally well on colored fabrics, but on colored goods I follow the glycerine with denatured alcohol, not with oxalic acid.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Well, I'm very glad to know about the warm glycerine on the peach stains. Now what about mildew? It's hard to prevent mildew stains on shower curtains and heavy towels, these August dog days.

MISS FURRY: Well, when mildew goes deep into a fabric the stain is mighty hard to get out. Mildew is a kind of mold, that grows right in the textile fibers.

Here again, I use oxalic acid to bleach out mildew stains when soap and water and sunshine fail. And for a shower curtain badly mildewed, I'd soak the whole thing in Javelle water. But I never, never use Javelle water on silk or wool, remember that.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Now, Miss Furry, for a big smudge of car grease on a pink silk dress, what would you do?

MISS FURRY: Oh, that's lots easier than the peach stain on the fine white linen napkins. On the peach stain, we had to use a bleach. On the grease spot, we'll use a solvent, but first we must lubricate that black grease with clean white grease.

So to start I'd get plenty of soft clean cloths, some white vaseline, or lard, or other unsalted fat, and a pound can of carbon tetrachloride.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Carbon tetrachloride did you say, Miss Furry? Can you buy that by the pound?

MISS FURRY: Yes, many drug stores carry carbon tetrachloride, or carbon tet as the clerks call it, in pound tin cans for 35 or 40 cents. Maybe I'd better spell that also: C - a - r - b - o - n t - e - t - r - a - c - h - l - o - r - i - d - e. I prefer carbon tetrachloride to other solvents for grease spots because it's non-explosive and non-inflammable and fairly cheap. And it never makes color run.

Now to get back to the silk dress with the spot of car grease. First scrape off all the black you can. Then turn the fabric over and from the under side work the lard or white vaseline all over the spot. Then take one of the clean soft rags and pick up all the black you can. Apply more lard and repeat.

Next you're ready to apply the solvent. Turn the spot face down on a soft clean pad, and with another clean cloth apply plenty of the carbon tetrachloride. Dip the spot in a small bowl of the tetrachloride if necessary and don't be afraid to use enough. That's a mistake people often make in stain removal. They rub the dirt in, instead of working from the wrong side and pushing it out onto a clean pad, and they don't use enough of the clean fresh solvent.

Last of all, brush lightly or "feather" the edges of the spot with a cloth moistened with the tetrachloride, so there won't be a ring, and shake the spot dry. If a ring does show, rub the spot a little with the thumb nail. It's probably just the finish in the fabric that's been displaced, and you can often brush or rub out the line.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Miss Furry, would you take out little spatters of salad oil on a white georgette blouse that some way?

MISS FURRY: No, I use an absorbent on little grease spots if they are on light material. As soon as possible after I notice the spots, I sprinkle them with talcum powder or French chalk. Sometimes I mix the white powder with carbon tetrachloride to form a stiff paste. Then I let this paste or dry powder stand on the grease spots for several hours or overnight. When I shake off the powder the spots go with it. Even for larger grease spots that you have to use a liquid solvent on later, this is a good way to begin. You notice I recommend this absorbent treatment only on light colored fabrics. On a dark material the powder would leave a conspicuous white mark.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Well, Miss Furry, that gives us the three main ways of taking stains out of fabrics, I believe. And now if I don't get them summarized straight you correct me. For difficult fruit stains and ink, we must use oxalic acid, Javelle water, or some other chemical bleach. For bad grease spots, we must have a solvent. Carbon tetrachloride is the one you like best to use, because there's no fire risk connected with it. Then for tiny grease spots on light colored thin fabrics, you find talcum powder or French chalk effective. In other words you first study the stain and the fabric and then you use a bleach, or a solvent, or an absorbent according to the character of the spot. Is that the idea?

MISS FURRY: Yes, Miss Van Deman, that's it. And I might also add, take out all stains as soon as you can after you notice them. The longer they stay, the more they set.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Thank you, Miss Furry.

Now, if anybody in the Household Calendar audience wants more information on stain removal, we'll be glad to have you write the Bureau of Home Economics here in Washington.

Goodbye, for this time.

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry should be supported by a valid receipt or invoice. This ensures transparency and allows for easy verification of the data. The text also mentions that regular audits are necessary to identify any discrepancies or errors in the accounting process.

In addition, the document highlights the need for a clear and concise reporting structure. Management should be provided with timely and accurate financial statements that clearly show the company's performance over a specific period. This information is crucial for making informed decisions and for communicating the company's financial health to stakeholders.

Furthermore, the document stresses the importance of maintaining up-to-date financial records. This includes not only the current period but also historical data for comparison and trend analysis. Proper record-keeping is essential for compliance with tax regulations and for providing a clear audit trail. The text also notes that digital accounting systems can significantly improve the efficiency and accuracy of these processes.

The document also discusses the role of internal controls in ensuring the integrity of financial data. These controls should be designed to prevent and detect errors or fraud. Key areas of focus include the segregation of duties, the authorization of transactions, and the regular reconciliation of accounts. By implementing robust internal controls, a company can reduce the risk of financial misstatements and ensure the reliability of its financial reporting.

Finally, the document concludes by reiterating the importance of a strong financial foundation for long-term success. This requires a commitment to high standards of accuracy and transparency in all financial reporting. By following these principles, a company can build trust with its investors and creditors, and ensure its financial health is well-documented and understood.

The document provides a comprehensive overview of the key principles and practices of sound financial management. It serves as a valuable guide for anyone responsible for the financial health of an organization. By adhering to these guidelines, companies can ensure their financial records are accurate, reliable, and compliant with all relevant regulations.